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April 28, 2005

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

We are writing to urge you to take a strong role in supporting the efforts of Iraqi women legislators and ensure that their voices are heard throughout Iraq's political transition. We especially believe it is important that you ensure that they are appropriately represented on the Constitution-drafting committee. As Chairs of the Congressional Iraqi Women's Caucus and the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, we believe that women's full participation in the political and economic development of Iraq is vital for that country's future.

As you know, over 2,000 Iraqi women ran for office in the January 2005 elections and 31 percent of the National Assembly is currently made up of women. They ran for office with the intent to represent their fellow Iraqis after decades of dictatorship and to help draft a Constitution that incorporates women's rights. Many Iraqi women are concerned about immediate issues such as the lack of security and the slow pace of reconstruction. They also have significant concerns about the contents of the Constitution that is to be drafted by August 15, 2005, in time for an October 15, 2005 referendum.

The women in Iraq's Parliament represent what is best about democracy. Many of us have been to Iraq and have met these brave women, many of whom are engineers, doctors and professors. Their intelligence and profound leadership skills are a testament to the potential for Iraqi women to engage in all aspects of political reconstruction.

As the Iraqi Parliament and government take root, we are deeply committed to ensuring that women do not get sidelined in the process and are given prominent positions in the Constitution-writing body. As you know, women represent nearly fifty percent of Iraq's population. As the President mentioned at Fort Hood in a speech on April 12th, 2005, "Iraqis have laid a solid foundation for democratic self-government." Without the active participation of women in the Iraqi government and in drafting the Constitution, Iraqis risks losing an important voice that is critical in shaping their foundation.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



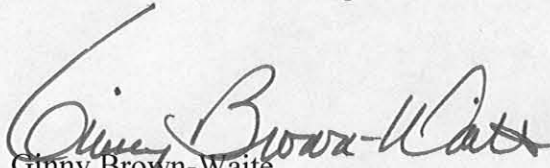
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